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-78G76GUIDELINES FOR SURVEY RESEARCHGOVERNMENT
Publications

Research projects in which some or all of the data are to be gathered by means of a survey pose special problems of planning and execution as well as of evaluation by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council and the experts it consults. These guidelines specify the general policies in this area and the rules and procedures which apply specifically to this kind of research. Applicants are invited to communicate with the Council's staff before submitting an application, so as to be assured that their application contains all the necessary information. In addition, applicants are invited to take note of the report prepared by the Consultative Group on Survey Research* where they will find, as well as expansion and elucidation, the discussion and reasoning behind the guidelines.

Council recognizes that it is particularly demanding with respect to researchers who intend to gather data by means of the survey instrument. It is felt, however, that these measures are justified, given the high costs and risks usually entailed by this type of undertaking. Furthermore, it is believed that these measures will enhance the quality of the projects submitted and the quality and importance of their results.

Joint efforts

A survey is frequently a complex and ambitious undertaking which requires the commitment of substantial resources, both human and financial. The collaboration of two or more investigators is often desirable and even essential. Joint efforts will be supported when warranted, as well projects presented by groups of scholars.

When two or more groups of scholars submit separate applications for work on similar projects, they may be invited to work together in presenting a joint application. Every effort is made to avoid unnecessary duplication of effort.

Pilot grants

In many cases, before submitting a substantial request for the intensive phase of data gathering and analysis, it is preferable for the investigators to carry out a certain amount of preliminary work, which will enable them to better specify their approach, hypotheses, and methodology. It may, for example, be necessary to conduct exploratory interviews, to formulate and pre-test a questionnaire, to construct or adapt an attitude scale, to collect data which will help to determine the sampling method, etc. This way of proceeding has the added advantage of permitting a more accurate estimate of the cost and duration of the research.

Council is prepared to consider requests for support for the preliminary phase of a project. Such requests will be evaluated in the usual way, and must be sufficiently detailed and precise to allow for a judgement on the merit of the preliminary work and the value of the project itself.

The award of a pilot grant must not be interpreted as a commitment on the part of Council to support the subsequent stages of the project. The applicant will be expected to submit a new application for the continuation of the work. This application must be accompanied by a substantial research report.

*The Report of the Consultative Group on Survey Research may be obtained directly from the Council for \$5.00 a copy in Canada and \$6.00 abroad.

Survey firms

Applicants who wish to use a specialized organization to carry out all or part of a survey must solicit and submit to the Council two or more specific tenders. The proposal must also contain a detailed description of the tasks to be assigned to this organization. These may **not** include tasks related to the planning or design of the project or to the preparation of reports or publications arising there from. It is expected that the allocation of duties and responsibilities between the investigator and the survey firm will be clearly established before an application for funds is submitted. Where two or more survey firms are in a position to carry out the proposed survey, the applicant may express a preference and provide an explanation for the choice. Furthermore, the investigator is expected to sign a contract with the company eventually chosen and funds will be released only after Council receives a copy of the contract.

Informing and protecting respondents

Since its financial support permits the execution of a project, Council must be assured that the investigator has taken every possible step to preserve adequately the privacy and anonymity of persons who are the subjects of the research. The means of assuring this will vary, of course, according to the nature of the research, but barring exceptions, the following conditions should be met:

- the explicit consent of the subjects must be obtained and the goals of the research explained in sufficient detail to permit their informed consent;
- the respondents must be given an explicit guarantee that their privacy will be respected and their anonymity preserved;
- the respondents must be advised that the information collected will eventually be made accessible to other researchers or even to the general public, and at that time, it may be used for purposes other than those of the original research.

Applicants must indicate precisely how these requirements of the Council will be met.

In certain cases, the investigator must obtain the prior agreement of the organization to which the subjects belong (school, police force, business firm, etc.) and, as a general rule, Council will insist on receiving a copy of such written authorizations before paying the grant.

If a researcher other than the one collecting the data wishes to know the identity of the respondents (for example, to interview them again on the same subject at a later date) the original investigator may release such information only after obtaining the explicit, written consent from each person involved.

Council requires that the project be examined and approved by the ethics committee of the university where the applicant is based, as it does in the case of any research involving human subjects.

Release of data

The data collected in a survey supported by Council are public property and not the property of the principal investigator. They must therefore eventually be made available to other scholars. Council acknowledges the right of the scholar who has conceived and carried out the survey to enjoy the exclusive use of the data for a certain time. It expects however that this will be for a maximum period of two years after the end of the data collection phase and encourages investigators to make some or all of the data available earlier if possible.

Unforeseen problems may, of course, make it necessary to extend the period of exclusive use. The investigator must request Council's authorization to do this and must present a detailed justification for the request.

Preservation of data

The data collected in a survey are often of great value and should, in general, be preserved. It is expected that researchers who have enjoyed Council support will deposit their collected data with an organization (archives, data bank, university survey centre) which can ensure their preservation and distribution and which, furthermore, can ensure that they are used in an ethical way. Council requires applicants to indicate, in their application, the name of the organization selected and the terms of the agreement.

The costs associated with the preservation of data by specialized organizations may not be covered by the budget of a Research Grant.

In most cases material will have to be specially prepared for deposit in a data bank, whether it is to preserve the anonymity of respondents, or to make the data more readily usable by other scholars for purposes other than those for which they were collected. This task is the responsibility of the investigator who, in most cases, will have to prepare a user's manual, which will include the questionnaire(s), the coding manual, and as much information as possible about the methodology and the circumstances of the inquiry. The work will entail certain additional costs, which Council is prepared to assume if this is warranted by the quality and importance of the data. Applicants should give some indication of these costs in their original request. Funds for this purpose will be awarded, only after receipt of a supplementary request, when the scholar is in a position to present a precise budget. Independent experts may be consulted before a decision is taken on the supplementary request.



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